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Chairman Reed E. Hundt
Federal Communications Commission
1919 "M" Street, N.W. Room #814
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Hundt:

The commission is currently involved in addressing a number of critical issues that will impact on the ability of schools and libraries to fully utilize telecommunications to expand the application of technology, for the purpose of enhancing student learning. The rate structure and discounted rates for schools and libraries is extremely important to us and to the students that we serve across the nation. Another critical issue is our inability, at present, to cross LATAs with IDLS (fiber optic lines) transmission. This issue is seriously impacting on our ability to take full advantage of the telecommunication technology that is available for distance learning. The Telecommunications Act of 1996, currently allows schools and libraries to utilize dedicated lines across LATAs. However, in environments such as New Jersey where all such transmission is done through switches, the Act does not permit us to cross the LATA until our telephone long distance carriers provide bridging services.

Relief could be granted by simply clarifying the word "dedicated" with a slash and the word "switched" in PL 104 - 104, Section 151 under the added new section known as subsection (g) (2) of Section 271. Enclosed is a single page fact sheet in which I have tried to identify the problem and provide a solution. Unless this issue is addressed we will continue to be limited to the use of ISDN transmission for interactive and distance learning in our state and in many other states.

Sincerely,



William H. Adams, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

WHA\ksp
enc.

xc: Commissioner James Quello
Commissioner Susan Ness
Commissioner Rachelle Chong

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UNRESOLVED ISSUE OF DISTANCE LEARNING TRANSMISSION FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES ACROSS LATAs

Overview: Currently, elementary schools, secondary schools and libraries cannot utilize fiber distance learning technology for educational purposes across artificial LATA boundaries due to a technicality in the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and current FCC regulations that preclude the use of switch technology across LATAs. This has resulted in the limited use of distance learning technology and has kept costs high. Further, it does not allow for the sharing of educational resources. Distance learning through full motion video transmission over fiber provides elementary schools, secondary schools and libraries with a tremendous opportunity to maximize the use of human and fiscal resources. It also provides students with learning opportunities that would otherwise be unavailable to them. The use of this technology, however, is severely limited under current regulations.

Issue: Elementary schools, secondary schools and libraries cannot utilize 45mbps transmission fiber optic cable capacity technology for distance learning across LATAs.

- This limits the use of the band width for full capacity 30 frames per second video transmission.
- This limits high speed internet access.
- This limits the educational use of this band width because of the amount of users within the LATA; thus, increasing costs.
- This limits the sharing of human and fiscal resources between school districts, individual schools and libraries.

Problem: Local telephone companies have made available IDLS (Interactive Distance Learning System) service that is only functional in the intra LATA at high costs.

- Long distance carriers currently do not provide full motion bridging services between LATAs.
- Broader issues of local and long distance markets have clouded this issue and have inhibited progress to resolve it.

Solution: Remove the LATA boundaries for elementary schools, secondary schools and libraries for distance learning educational transmission.

OR

Change the current LATA exemption language which applies only to dedicated lines to include switch transmission for elementary schools, secondary schools and libraries for educational or distance learning transmission.

Benefit: Removal of this restriction would result in the increased use of distance learning, as an educational option and would result in faster implementation of this technology in our nation's schools.

- Resources could more readily be shared and student learning options increased.
- The establishment of the virtual school house or school without walls could become a reality.
- Courses and programs that could otherwise not economically be offered in an individual school district, could be offered in a more economical fashion.
- The playing field between higher wealth and lower wealth school districts, schools and libraries would be leveled as a result of equal access to the system across LATA lines.
- The use of technology to enhance learning and education would be significantly increased.